

# End Of Earth: Ice Planet

## Chapter One: Now You Know

Date: December 26, 2162 Location: Old Earth Orbit, Space Station Beta

"My planet was dead to begin with." John said "Though it was not my planet, not entirely. It was my grandfather's planet, and his fathers before him." He was standing in the sitting room where his grandfather, Eric, had told him of how Earth was no more; and after that he watched the Tribunal take his grandfather away, dead. The memories were not pleasant, they were painful and bitter. He picked up the picture of his grandmother, the same picture his grandfather look at often when he thought about the past.

"That was very brave of our grandfather to give you that information knowing what his actions caused." A female voice said. "His life."

John deactivated a recording device and turned away from a bookshelf to the doorway where his sister was barely inside the room. "Julie. What are you doing here?" He hadn't noticed the door open or her even docking with the station. It had been a long time of silence for him and now that there was someone to talk to, he wasn't quite sure if it was good or bad. Julie was family so it was at least a step in a good direction.

Julie walked closer to her brother. "Life on the moon turns into cold dark nights these days." John shot her a look that said what are you talking about. Julie ignored her brother for a moment. As she looked around the room she approached a large bookshelf. Julie scanned the titles making note of only a few she would be interested in reading. After she finished browsing she turned back to John who was still trying to figure out why she had made the long trip to see what he was up to. "It's been three weeks, mother is worried about you. John. What on Earth are you doing up here?"

John smiled back. "We're not on Earth, so I could say I'm doing nothing." He replied with a smirk on his face. "I'm more sure you'd want to know." He was still carrying the picture not noticing the frame in his hands. "I've been searching for a shuttle." There, part of the secret was out. Of course now that part of the door was open, she would want to walk the rest of the way inside with more questions.

"A shuttle?" Julie asked. She was confused by what her brother was saying.

He only briefly explained to her what Eric, their grandfather, had said. John didn't want to bring Julie fully up to date in order to protect her from harm. He had seen what the Tribunal did to Eric and didn't want that to happen to more of his family members.

"What is this all about John?"

John shook his head. "I cannot tell you." In his mind he wanted to tell her the full truth. He needed help. He wanted help. But it would be wrong to endanger her life. John had been looking for that shuttle ever since his grandfather told him of its existence. But he had no luck with his search and was running out of options. "I'm sorry." He turned his attention back to the picture.

Julie took the picture out of John's hand and set it roughly down on a nearby table causing the back to fall off. They watched in silence as the back landed on the table and a piece of notepaper that had been hiding behind the picture fell to the ground. When Julie realized what happened she knelt down and picked the paper up. "I'm so sorry." Julie began to say. she stopped suddenly, noticing something. It looked like directions or possible architect plans for the station. "Hold on, what's this?" She unfolded the paper and studied the hand drawn schematic for a moment.

John snatched the paper gently from his sister's hand "I'll take that", it was pretty brittle. From the looks of it, his grandfather must of hid the paper a very long time ago.

Julie was clearly upset with her brother. "Well? What is it?" She folded her arms across her chest and glared at John waiting for an answer. Would he give it to her, or would she have to wait and find out. Would she ever find out? If her brother wouldn't give the answer, she was determined to get the information out of him one way or another.

After a few more moments of studying the paper John pocketed it and looked back to his sister. "Oh nothing, just a drawing of an outdated home a while ago on Earth." He said trying to sidestep the moment and move on without having to explain anything. "Why don't you return home, tell mom I'll be there shortly."

Julie shook her head, unfolded her arms, and shook a finger at John. "Oh no you don't! You're going to find out where that paper leads. I'm not that stupid. You're lying. I'm coming with you to find out what's up."

John tried to argue the point and get out of it. "I tell you it's nothing! Just do as I asked. Please." He waited expecting her to obey his orders but she didn't move an inch.

Julie simply stared back at her brother. "We're not on a ship John, and you're not my commanding officer. I'm older than you remember? You can't boss me around." She stuck a pointed finger at John's chest a few times clearly making her point.

John, knowing she wasn't about to move, sighed his surrender. "Oh all right." he pulled the schematic back out of his pocket and held it up for her to see. "This is a map grandpa drew so he wouldn't forget where he hid grandmother's shuttle." He paused. "I intend on finding that shuttle and taking it back to a planet that requested our grandparents to visit again."

"Why?" Julie asked. "You didn't know these people. We weren't even alive yet."

John picked up the alien device and handed it to Julie. "Read what that says." He watched as Julie took the device from him and stared at the alien language. She turned it over and read the short phrase requesting a return visit; then looked back to John who was ready to continue with his argument.

"Now listen to this." John said as he picked up a recording device and played part of Eric's parting words. As the voice of the dead spoke, Julie sank down to the floor until she was sitting with her legs crossed. Hearing her grandfather's voice again was a little disturbing, she hadn't been fully prepared for it.

"We were wrong, this device had nothing to do with what happened. I want you to travel back to the Ice Planet John. Find out why they wanted us to travel back to their planet. Now I really don't have much time, only a few seconds. Listen to me carefully. Use this room for your research, all of my technical diaries are here. You should find them most useful. Rebecca's original shuttle is here as well. I don't have time to show you where it is, but it's here believe me."

"Now I know."

John nodded. "Now you know." He paused trying to figure out the right words to say to her. "What are we going to do about it?"

"We..." Julie said not fully recognizing that John had just fully enlisted her help. She was still focused on hearing her grandfather's voice.

"Yeah." John said. "You wanted to be a part of this so now you're on." He set the recording device down on the table. "I will warn you. If anyone finds out we took that shuttle to that planet, the Tribunal will be on our tail before you can say gotcha." He said allowing her a way out. "If you don't want to go through with this, I understand."

Julie stood up slowly hoping she wouldn't lose her balance. She was still in a state of shock, but that shock would soon leave her body and allow her to focus on the task at hand. "Let's go find that shuttle."

John nodded his approval, took the schematic out of his pocket, and handed it to Julie. "You were always better at reading maps..."

She accepted the paper and smiled, she was now part of the team.

## **Chapter Two: What to do With Them**

Date: December 27, 2162 Location: Dark Side of the Moon

In an isolated section of the Moon, the Tribunal sat in council. The room was fairly small in size, nine people were seated around a table made out of oak. They had been in session for a few hours and were discussing a matter of utmost importance. A man seated at the head of the table looked over several computer printouts. After scanning the papers for a moment, he looked to the other council members.

"I am pleased with your work. Everyone who had knowledge of Earth's destruction has been properly dealt with and eliminated." He smiled. For the majority of the cases the people that held knowledge of Earth's destruciton had been easy to track down. There had been a few that were difficult to find at first, but eventually they were apprehended and the devices in their arms were activated providing a nice painless death. "Let's move on to other concerns. Over the past thirty years population on the moon has grown rapidly. Before long it will be completely filled and there will be no more space for expansion. Rumors have risen about relocation to other planets." He paused. "To do so would mean suicide. We do not have the resources to relocate."

"Tom, what about the FTL project?" A council member named Trina asked.

George, another council member, answered her question. "Useless. It was a doomed project from the get go. A failure. We don't know how to create a stable bubble around the ship so time stays the same for its occupants as that of the Moon."

Tom, the head council member, nodded in agreement. "That's right. There were speculations that Eric Tompson tried to refit his wife's shuttle with an upgraded version of the FTL device but we don't even know where that shuttle is." He tapped two fingers on the desk. "Then there's the situation about his grandson John. I have suspicions that Eric told John some information. Which brings me to our next subject, what to do with them."

A man seated at the end of the table slowly raised his hand. "I have an idea." He stood from his chair to voice his opinion. "How about we track them down? We were able to monitor the others, why can't we track them? Granted they don't have the arm units, but we can still follow them." He stood in complete silence waiting for a motion from Tom.

"All right." Tom said after carefully considering the man's idea. "Report all information directly to me no matter how insignificant. Good Luck Seth, you're dismissed."

Seth smiled at the news, gathered his briefcase and other belongings, and turned around to exit out the door.

After Seth left the room Tom continued talking. "I don't know if I can trust him. He's gone against me in the past." He picked up a pencil. "If Seth fails in his assignment, I will go after them myself. I knew their grandfather quite well, they must be stopped. Whatever they are doing, they must be stopped." He interlocked his fingers tightly and with a dark smile on his face dismissed the Tribunal.

## Chapter Three: Gaining Access

Date: December 27, 2162 Location: Old Earth Orbit, Space Station Beta

John and Julie were down in a deep access tunnel of their grandfather's station in what would be Earth's orbit if it were still there. They were crawling in a cramped space underneath their grandfather's living section of the station. When he first opened the access hatch, John thought the entire section would be full of cobwebs and spiders, he was partly correct. There were a few cobwebs here and there, but so far he hadn't seen, or at least noticed, any spiders to claim those cobwebs. He was rather pleased there were no obstructions that might get in their way, at least not yet. As they continued crawling, the space in front of them came to a dead end with options to the right or the left.

John looked to Julie who was holding the map. "Which way?"

Julie took a few moments to analyze the information on the paper. As a child she had enjoyed exploring man made caves inside the moon. This was a little different. On the moon she was floating and was wearing a suit that protected her from the vacuum of space. Here she relied on artificial gravity and a jumpsuit designed for ease of movement in a cramped environment. "That way." She said as she moved towards the left access tunnel.

After a few more minutes of crawling they came to a large open space that would allow them to stand. As John looked around he noted two doors to choose from. One looked like it had been well worn and used, but the other looked as though it hadn't been used in ages. "Let me guess. Door number two right?" He said as he pointed to the unused door.

Julie nodded her head and began to recite a poem.

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-- I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference."

John looked to his sister with a smile. "Always reciting literature."

Julie smiled back. "Someone has to." She walked up to the door and examined it. A large access panel was in the middle. "Take a look at this." She didn't know what to make of it.

John approached the door and stared at the panel. "This is an old style binary control access." He said. "I've seen something like this when I was studying history on the Internet. It was used mostly in the late 1900's and a little after that into the 2090's."

"What do we do?" Julie asked.

John punched a few buttons which activated the panel. A small keyboard appeared from a slot in the door. John stared at the keyboard for a few moments. He pressed a few keystrokes that

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allowed the system to boot up. Several words, numbers, and crude two dimensional images appeared on the screen.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

John proceeded to enter his name using the keyboard. He had always been interested in older operating systems.

"Where's the touch screen?" Julie asked. She clearly didn't understand the history of computers.

John shook his head. "They didn't have those until the year 2132." After he finished typing his name, John hit the enter key.

IDENTITY UNKNOWN

The computer responded.

RETURNING TO PRIMARY STARTUP MODE

A few seconds passed and the screen changed it's appearance to when John first booted the system. John looked to Julie and then back to the computer.

"What about just a last name?" Julie suggested.

John keyed in Tompson and pressed enter. Again the computer didn't like what he keyed in, went through the same error message, and ended back at the beginning.

"What about Grandpa's name." Julie said.

John nodded and keyed in Eric Tompson. As he pressed enter, the screen changed.

ACCESS GRANTED

Underneath were several questions relating to their grandfather's life.

"He had to make this complicated didn't he." Julie said as she gave a sigh. She never was able to be calm about things and had a tendency to become stressed a little too soon before possible avenues were explored.

John smiled. "You know how grandpa liked his privacy." He took a small device out, of his pocket, and copied the list of seven questions down. "Let's go back to the sitting room and study his journals."

Julie nodded her approval and they headed back towards the access tunnel that would take them up to the main deck of the station.

As they entered the sitting room John walked over to a bookcase on one end as Julie went to the other. John had a feeling their search would take a while to complete, there were over a thousand books in the room. He didn't dread the task, John had always been interested in finding out more information about his grandfather's life. Now he had the opportunity to do so.

John picked up a book and read its title to himself. Theory to FTL. "This might be worth looking into later." He said as he set the book down on an end table. John proceeded to scan the titles of the other books. The majority of them were technical journals and other material on space flight.

On the other side of the room Julie was searching through book titles herself. She picked up one near the end, flipped it open and started to read. It walked mostly of Eric's life in his later years. She kept reading with deep intent in the information on the pages. Julie took a few notes that might help in getting through the security system on the door.

Date: Two Days Later, December 29, 2162 Location: Old Earth Orbit, Space Station Beta

John and Julie were still hard at work searching for information in the volumes of Eric's journals. They managed to find answers for six of the seven questions on the list John made.

"What are we looking for again?" Julie asked while brushing her dark colored hair away from her face.

John looked at his list. "Who won the final game of poker on October 7th, 2154." John laughed as he gave the response. "He sure has a unique security system huh?"

Julie frowned. She was becoming more stressed as each hour passed by. "Why don't you just bypass the system." She said. "You must have an advanced knowledge about computers to do that."

John hesitated. "I was wondering how long it would take you to figure that out." A partial smile formed on his face. Would she be angry with him or not.

Julie stood up from the floor, she was starting to become agitated. "What?! You mean you could of gotten passed that door the first time we saw it!"

John nodded as his smile grew. "If I would of done that we wouldn't have found out all of this information about grandpa. Besides, I needed to come up here to get his technical journals and papers anyway." He held up a few books in his hand.

Julie walked over to her brother and took the books away from him. She exited the room in a quick pace. John followed her, he was going to have to find a way to make things right. He had seen his sister angry before. "Hell hath no fury as a woman's scorn." John said under his breath.

## Chapter Four: Rebecca

Date: December 29, 2162 Location: Tunnel Access Underneath Space Station Beta

Once again John and Julie were on their way towards the shuttle behind the computer sealed door. This time, however, Julie was crawling a few meters ahead of her brother. As she reached the room with the doors she paced around waiting for John to show up. When he did she gave him a smile that showed she was still angry with him.

John stood from the tunnel, entered the room, and walked over to the computer panel on the door. As the system began to boot up, he pressed a few keys that bypassed the entire sequence.

ACCESS GRANTED

John proceeded to key in more commands at the keyboard. "All right, that should get us in." He said while pressing the enter key.

SYSTEM ACCESS GRANTED

"You did it!" Julie said with excitement.

Another line of text appeared on the screen.

ENTER AUTHORIZATION CODE

Underneath was a brief explanation.

THE SYSTEM HAS BEEN BYPASSED BY UNKNOWN MEANS

DECEMBER 29, 2162 AT 04:00 AM

FAILSAFE PROTOCOLS ARE NOW ACTIVE

"What does that mean?" Julie asked.

John re-read the information, before answering, to make sure he understood it correctly. "It knows we didn't answer the questions. We hopped the fence instead of going through the gate." He paused. "Grandpa set this password system up in the event anyone attempted to do what we did."

"Can't you bypass this as well?"

John shook his head. "Nope. Sorry but the backup is a much more advanced system than the primary access codes." he stared at the display. "We need the password, and to give you some more stress we only have three chances. Just like baseball."

"I always hated that game." Julie said. "How about the name of the ship he served on. Or the captain he served under."



John shook his head. "Something more personal."

Julie pondered that one for a few minutes. "His dog? No... His station? No, that wouldn't be it." She scratched the back of her head as though it would help. "I got it. How about grandma's name."

John nodded. "It's worth a shot." He keyed in Rebecca, pressed enter and waited for the computer to respond.

ACCESS GRANTED

The panel turned off and the door opened. On the other side, of the door, was a room twice the size of the room they were standing in. A shuttle large as life was in the center of the room. John accessed a lighting control and the room was no longer dark. As they entered, John noticed that the shuttle was covered with cobwebs from head to two.

John looked at the shuttle with awe. He had never seen a private shuttle before. The only people who owned them were either in the military or very rich. He was none of the above and had therefore only seen and been on public transport shuttles that were constantly breaking down because of stress on their hulls. "Let's get her cleaned up." He said while picking up a bucket that had rags in it.

Julie took a rag from the bucket and started to brush the ship taking cobwebs with it. As she did so, she wondered if they would have any luck with getting the shuttle up and running again.

One Hour Later

John was finishing his polishing job on the shuttle. She looked almost brand new. There were still a few scratches here and there, but John overlooked those marks. What mattered most was if the shuttle would fly or not. He walked over to an access hatch and opened it. The door creaked and squeaked a little as the door opened upwards.

Julie stood in front of the shuttle with a look of disbelief on her face. "Do you honestly think we'll get this thing working again?"

John nodded "We have to." He stepped inside the shuttle, found one of the pilots chairs and sat down at the console. He pressed a few switches which brought the main core on-line. "After all these years it still works. That's a good sign." He said. "Come in here! I want you to see this."

Julie walked around the shuttle to where the door was and stepped inside. As she did, she took a look around. "This is kind of... interesting." She walked towards the back of the shuttle and stared at the floor. "What a mess." Several pieces of equipment cluttered the deck. "These must be the parts grandpa was working on."

John looked towards her direction. "The FTL device?"

Julie gave a nod. "I think so." She knelt down next to the pieces. "How are we suppose to put this together? It doesn't look like anything."

"Think of it as a puzzle." John said as he picked up a book that he brought with him from Eric's library. He stood from the chair and joined his sister at the back of the shuttle. "We have the blueprints right here." He flipped open the book and skimmed through the pages until he found instructions to put the device together. "This might take some time." John explained. "I'm no expert when it comes to this stuff."

Julie nodded "I'm going to go back to the main deck. I want to read some more of granpa's life." She stood from the deck and exited the shuttle.

John figured as much. Julie didn't understand anything when it came to technical terms and equipment. He picked up a few devices off the floor and began to analyze them. Hoping to put together his grandfather's design.

## **Chapter Five: I know you're here!**

Date: December 30, 2162 Location: Space Station Beta, Airlock Access

Julie approached the airlock after being summoned by the doorbell. She checked an external security camera to see who it was. A man wearing a black trenchcoat was on the other side waiting for the door to open. She recognized the 'uniform' almost immediately. It was a member of the Tribunal. He was up to something and she didn't like it. Julie left the airlock and headed towards the access tunnel to tell John.

Outside the airlock Seth was getting tired of waiting. He took a device out of his coat and placed it to the door. The device attached to the door upon contact, it hung there ready for use. Seth pressed a few buttons on the device. A LED display lit up.

WORKING

ACCESS OVERRIDDEN

As the doors opened, Seth walked inside. He continued down the long hallway until he reached the sitting room. Books were cluttered all over the floor. "What are they doing?" he said to himself. He exited the room trying to find John and Julie. "I know you're here!" Seth yelled out.

Down in the access tunnel Julie was moving as quickly as she could to get to John. They would never make it to the Ice Planet if the Tribunal had their way. As she continued crawling, a bright light appeared from behind. She froze for a moment and turned her head to see who it was. Seth had found her. He was moving fast and would catch up with her soon. Julie stopped

looking behind her, looked forward, and kept moving. She was only a few feet from the split in the tunnel. If Seth didn't have that light shining on her she might of been able to lose him, but that wasn't possible. As she came to the option to go left or right she moved to the right going the opposite direction away from John and the shuttle. For a brief moment the tunnel became darker. She crawled faster hoping to find a place to hide. Julie had never seen that part of the tunnel system. Therefore she didn't know what to expect. As she kept crawling, a fear deep inside became reality. The tunnel came to a dead end. Directly in front of her was a closed access hatch. Julie looked through a small window on the hatch. All she could see were twinkling stars in the midst of a black sea. If she opened the hatch, the tunnel would depressurize and she would be pulled out into space. Julie put her arms around her legs and brought them close to her chest hugging them tightly. She was cornered, there was no way out except that of death. All Julie could do was wait for the Tribunal Agent to arrive.

## **Chapter Six: Let Me Help You**

Date: December 30, 2162 Location: Docking Bay, Space Station Beta

In the docking bay, John was still working on the shuttle's FTL device. He only had a third of it assembled. John was learning to exercise a lot of patience and self control as he worked on the shuttle's systems. He was growing more tired as the hours ticked by. John's body was telling him to rest while his head was pushing him to keep going. He decided to follow the instincts of his mind. As he picked up a piece of equipment, John started to shake a little. It had been a while since he'd eaten anything and was beginning to feel the effects. He stood from the deck, "I need a clear head for this." John said as he exited the shuttle and walked towards the outer room. As John reached the room he stopped dead in his tracks. Julie was standing next to the access tunnel and she wasn't alone.

"What are you two doing?" Seth asked as he raised a gun and pointed it at John.

"What is this?" John asked in a tone full of anger. "I demand to know your intentions!"

Seth shook his head. "No questions from you, just answers." He said as he cocked the gun preparing it to discharge at a slight pull of the trigger. "The Tribunal knows you're doing something here."

John scratched his head. Something about all of this didn't seem quite right. "This isn't usually how the Tribunal tracks people." He said with a straight face. He looked at Seth wondering if he could disarm him. Probably not. John then gave a slight smile. "You're not following your standard procedures."

Seth nodded. "I know, but what the Tribunal doesn't know won't hurt them." Seth lowered the gun for a moment as he realized that he was taking matters into his own hands.

"Seth, what are you doing here?" John asked.

Julie was stunned. "You know him?" She was a tad surprised that the information shocked her. Julie didn't really know much about John's friends or his social acquaintances.

John nodded his head slowly. "Last time I saw him he was entering the academy." He turned his attention back to Seth. "Never thought you'd make it this far though." He paused. "I also read about Tom, his grandfather, from the journals upstairs. Tom was the security officer aboard the Alaphei." John paused. "Strange seeing you here."

Seth uncocked the gun and holstered it. "Your information is partly right. Tom is my father." "How?" John said. "If that were the case, you'd be much older."

Seth nodded his head. "I know. But once I joined the Tribunal, they experimented on me. I don't age much anymore." He looked to Julie and stared at her face. "In fact, I stopped aging after I turned 22."

Sensing that he would be more cooperative John answered Seth's first question. "My grandfather wanted me to complete a mission." He walked towards Seth and stood in front of him.

Seth stood his ground. "You're going to the Ice Planet." He said. "Don't be alarmed, I know all about the alien device, the message requesting for someone to go back, and the shuttle." He paused, "And on top of all that you have an FTL Device that needs some work."

John nodded his head. "Yes."

"Why are you doing this?" Julie asked.

Seth turned to his side to face Julie. "Because I know what kind of future we, as a people, are capable of. Let me help you."

John still wasn't completely sure if he could trust Seth. But that was a risk he was willing to take. "Welcome aboard." He said after a moment of thought. "But one slip and you're history."

Seth smiled. "I think I've heard that before." He held out a hand for John to shake. "Agreed."

John shook Seth's hand with a tight grip. He wanted Seth to know that he was serious and that he meant business. "Before we continue, how about we head upstairs and get something to eat." He walked towards the access tunnel. Maybe this will work after all, John thought to himself.

Julie eyed Seth closely. It would take some time for her to trust him. Only a few minutes ago he had been chasing her and now she was expected to accept him. She was curious how Seth was and how he acted before he joined the Tribunal. She had heard various stories and rumors of how instructors for the Tribunal treat people training to become Tribunal Agents. The stories were difficult to hear at times. They had the capabilities to bring horrific nightmares to otherwise peaceful dreams. The thought made Julie shudder.

Seth walked closer to Julie. He wasn't invading her personal space, but he certainly was close. Another inch and he would be too close for comfort. She reasoned that even though Seth was going against the Tribunal, his conditioning was with him all the time. She liked to think of the conditioning as torture methods for loyalty.

"Why didn't you tell him what hapened in the tunnel?" Seth asked as he stared into her blue eyes. It was as if he was peering into her deeper inner most thoughts. The place of the mind where people usually hide their true self and where their fears reside.

Julie tried to brush it aside. She took a step backward trying to increase the space between the two of them. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Seth shook his head. "You know exactly what I'm talking about." He replied. "You wanted to pull that lever. You wanted to eject us both into space." Seth paused for a moment. "The only thing I don't understand is why you didn't go through with it." He put a finger to his right temple. "Let's recall the past." Seth began to describe the events that transpired in the tunnel.

Tunnel Access 20 Minutes Earlier

...Julie put her arms around her legs and brought them close to her chest hugging them tightly. She was cornered, there was no way out except that of death. All Julie could do was wait for the Tribunal Agent to arrive.

As Julie was huddled next to the access hatch she looked around desperately hoping to find something to use as a weapon. She noticed two levers next to the door, one would seal the tunnel a few feet before the hatch and the other would open the hatch allowing deadly access into space. She could defeat the agent while saving her brother's life at the same time. As Julie stared at the lever a bright light hit her face.

"You have no where to run." A voice said in a calm cold tone. "You're cornered, trapped like a defensless puppy." The voice said as it came closer. Seth kept moving until he was a foot in front of Julie, there was enough room to seal the tunnel.

Julie reached for the ejection lever and held her hand on it ready to pull it down. "If I activate this we'll die." She said.

"Yes, but so will your brother." Seth said. He began to move closer to Julie. "I don't think you want to risk it."

Julie nodded. "You're right." She moved her hand over to the first lever and pulled it. The tunnel sealed behind Seth with a loud clanking sound. He turned around and crawled to the door. Seth pulled out the same device he used on the airlock door and tried it on the seal infront of him, but had no success. The door was equipped with a type of shielding device that nothing could penetrate. Seth pulled out a gun and pointed it at the barrier.

"I wouldn't try that." Julie said. "I don't know much about those fields, but I doubt they like bullets. They'll probably bounce off and kill you."

Seth knew she was right. He turned around and faced her. "Very clever." He said. "Have you ever thought about joining the military?"

Julie reached for the second lever preparing to pull it. "This way John will still be alive."

"But you'll die in the process."

Julie nodded. "Yep." She gripped her hand tightly around the lever. As Julie felt the cold metal in her hand, she was hoping to find some other way to get out of the current situation. "Give up and I'll let you go."

Seth looked to Julie, he had no where to go. "You might be in control for now, but that won't last long. If I die, another will come in my place. Your brother will always be followed."

Julie smiled, she was gaining more confidence that she would have Seth eating out of her hand soon. "Yes, but he'll defeat them just as I've defeated you."

Seth nodded his head. "All right. You win." He put his hands up showing that he surrendered.

Julie let go of the lever and opened the tunnel again. She pointed to the tunnel. "Let's go."

Docking Bay 20 Minutes Later

Julie staggered backwards after Seth closed the telepathic link to her mind. He had managed to tap directly into her thoughts and in a way violated her. "What did you do to me?"

Seth held out his hands to steady her. As he grabbed ahold of her shoulders Seth gave his reply. "I'm sorry, it's another trait the Tribunal has experimented with on me." He paused. "So, why didn't you tell?"

Julie regained her sense of balance. "I didn't feel it necessary." She said in a calm tone.

Seth nodded. "Okay, so you really don't want to tell me. Fine..."

Their conversation was cut short as John's voice came down the tunnel. "Hey, are you guys coming or not?"

Seth and Julie headed to the tunnel that would take them to the upper level. As she left the docking bay, Julie started to wonder why she hadn't pulled that hatch, if she did she wouldn't have to worry about Seth anymore.

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After the trio had something to eat, they were back down in the docking bay. Seth walked towards the shuttle and inspected the outside hull plating with a scanner. He was shocked at his findings. "The hull is almost at peak efficiency." he made some more scans. "Usually I

don't come across ships that are still intact and operation after 62 years, this is truly amazing."

John smiled. "Well the shuttle has been in storage for sometime now. She hasn't been in open space since my grandparents put her here."

"It's a shame they had to steal from the government so you two could come along and complete some fantasy project." Seth accused. "The Tribunal wondered for a very long time about what happened to this ship. Dad said it took quite a few favors just to track down the history records." Seth said. He was irritated about the past, especially how Eric had fooled the government. "And even then he never did get..." Seth stopped as he realized that he was defending the people he had just sworn he was against about an hour ago. "Nevermind about that." He walked inside the shuttle to allow time to cool off.

Julie and John exchanged glances. They were thinking the exact same thing. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to accept Seth on as part of the team. Julie was starting to fear a little more. She still wondered if her doubts about Seth would come to pass or stay hidden, unwilling to show themselves. She had enough time on her hands to find out. The three of them would be together for at least a few more days.

## **Chapter Seven: All Systems Go**

Date: January 3, 2163 Location: Docking Bay, Space Station Beta

After a few days had gone by, the group was still working on the FTL device. Seth had been right they did need help with the task of making the device operational. If he hadn't showed up, John would of been working on it for a lot longer than it was taking Seth to complete the job.

Inside the shuttle, Seth was halfway underneath a console working as fast as he could. As he promised, he sent communiques on a regular basis to his father. The transmissions contained lies that would keep the Tribunal from sending someone else to complete his assignment and realize what he was actually up to. As Seth worked on the console upgrading the system, he found himself to be impressed by the design. Even though it was old, Seth was interested in how they use to build the shuttles. Over the years the design improved dramatically allowing pilots more freedom and maneuverability. He was also intrigued by the fact that the United States won the war by using such archaic devices and equipment.

"How's it going?" Julie asked. She was carrying a book in her hand.

Seth was startled by the unannounced visitor, something that rarely happened. He had excellent hearing, usually. Seth bumped his head on the underside of the console. "Ow!" He said as he crawled out from the cramped space. Rubbing his head to ease the pain he replied. "Okay so far. How's the search going for those technical journals?"

"This is what we've found so far." Julie replied as she handed Seth the book. She kept a safe distance from Seth showing her distrust.

"Still don't believe me huh?"

Julie had a blank expression on her face. Was Seth reading her mind using telepathy, or was he simply reading her body language. She couldn't tell.

Seth smiled. "I was reading your body language actually." He could read her mind so easily. Any passing thought he could pickup, translate it to his own memory patterns and store it for future use, if he wanted to.

"Am I interrupting something?" A deep voice asked.

Seth and Julie both looked to the shuttle's access door and saw John standing there with more books in his hands. Both of them didn't know how long John had been in the doorway. It didn't bother Julie, she was use to her brother listening in on her conversations. Seth on the other hand had an expression full of shock on his face. Maybe he was starting to lose his touch and abilities. He had been around the Tompsons for a few days, maybe they were having some kind of affect on him. For the moment, he brushed the thought aside.

"Of course not." Julie answered. "I was just giving Seth a book." She exited the shuttle in a semi quick pace.

John walked towards Seth and handed him a few more books. "Found these as well, they should help out in your work." Seth went to reach for the books and found that John wasn't ready to let go, he had somehting more to say. "You stay away from my sister. Is that understood?"

Seth nodded "Yeah."

John released the book giving Seth access to the material. "What can I assist you with?"

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Date: Jan 5, 2163 Location: Docking Bay, Space Station Beta

Seth and John exited the shuttle and found Julie asleep on the floor. They had been working on the project for a while, usually without much sleep. John walked over to his sister and picked up her hand waking her up.

As she came to, Julie looked to her brother, then to Seth, and then back to her brother.

"What's going on?" While trying to become fully alert, she rubbed her eyes. Julie hadn't meant to fall asleep like she did, it just happened. As she stood up, John explained what was going on.



"Everything seems to check out." John said. "We can leave here anytime we want." He looked back to Seth.

Seth gave a slight smile. "All systems go." He was glad to have helped out in the project. He wasn't totally confident everything would run smoothly, but at least he had an option to get away from the Tribunal.

Julie headed towards the tunnel. "I'll go..."

John held up a storage container. "You already did that a few days ago remember?" The container had personal items they would need for the trip.

"Oh." Julie replied. "I must have forgotten." She took the container from her brother and boarded the ship.

Seth walked towards the shuttle. "Does she have a name?"

"The ship?" John asked. "No. I didn't find anykind of documentation or plaque inside." He surveyed the vessel and thought about what they were about to embark on. John was rather excited about the entire experience.

Seth nodded. "I thought so. Personal shuttles weren't required to have names until a few years ago. But that usually didn't stop people from giving them a name anyway." He paused. "Any ideas?"

John paced back and forth for a moment. He wanted the name to be perfect, he wanted it to always be remembered, if they ever got back to Earth. "Let's call her Rebecca."

Seth stood in silence for a moment. He picked up a piece of equipment that was designed to apply letters to ships hulls, and handed it to John. "I think you should do the honors."

John accepted the equipment and approached the ship. After a moment, he was finished. "Julie, come out here."

Julie poked her head out the door. "Yeah?"

"What do you think?" John said as he pointed to the vessel.

Julie walked completely outside of the ship and stood by her brother. As she read the side of the ship, a smile formed on her face.

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"It's perfect." She said. "What about a motto?"

Seth and John looked to each other and then back to Julie.

"Well," Seth said. "Since you're the one fond of poems, why don't you think of something fitting." He had gotten to know the family quite well over the past few days of working with them. It was true, he was growing soft.

"How about..." Julie began to say. She picked up the device that John held in his hands and applied several letters to the hull. When she was finished, Julie stepped back for John and Seth to look over her work.

"Yesterday is only a shadow in our existence"

"We're good to go." John said. They walked to the access door and entered the shuttle.

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On the underside of the station, two large doors opened allowing the shuttle into open space for the first time in over 50 years. It was time to stretch her legs, it was time to complete a mission. Inside the shuttle, John and Seth were seated at the primary consoles at the front of the ship. Julie was at an aft station. She didn't know much about technology, so she just sat there and didn't touch anything.

"Bring the FTL device on-line." John said.

Seth hit a few switches. The engine began to hum gently. When it was all on-line, Seth turned to John. "After going through your Grandfather's records, I've managed to create a field that will encompass the ship. It should allow us to not lose time, like your grandparents so long ago." He paused. "Of course, I don't know how stable it is. It's never been tested, so if it fails..."

"We'll have lost some years."

Seth nodded. "Yes."

John looked to Julie. "You can always stay behind."

Julie shook her head. "If we do this, we do it together." She didn't really have anything going for her back on the Moon. Who knows, maybe things will change if this does work. Julie thought to her self. She then stopped when she noticed Seth looked in her direction. Julie had forgotten for a moment that he could read her mind. As she looked to Seth, she could tell that he wanted things to change. "Let's go."

John smiled at her choice. He flipped a few switches and the ship went off into the distance away from the station at speeds faster than light. It didn't take much to travel to the Ice Planet, only a few minutes. As John sat there, he watched as the counter changed over. He looked down to a piece of paper that had coordinates on it for the Ice Planet. When the numbers on the counter matched the numbers on the paper, he shut the device down and the ship came to a dead stop.

Seth looked out the window. A large blue planet was sitting in front of them. He pressed a few controls and took the ship into orbit of the planet. "All right, what do we do now?"

John shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know." He reached behind his chair and picked up the alien device. As he looked it over, the language that he hadn't been able to read turned into clear plain english. "Look at this." He said as he handed the device to Seth.

Seth took the device and read what was written on it. From what he could tell, it was instructinos for them to land on the planet at a specified location. He started entering in the location into the main computer. After a few moments, the ship started to descend down to the ice planet.

## **Chapter Eight: Welcome Home**

Date: January 5, 2163 Location: Ice Planet

As the ship kept descending downward, John looked out the window. The entire planet was literally frozen. The oceans were large blocks of ice and the landscape wasn't better off. From what he could tell, nothing could survive the outside, it was far from hospitable. John hoped that he was doing the right thing.

A few moments passed and Seth gently landed the vessel on a docking platform of somekind. "I wonder what happens now." He said.

The speakers came to life with a crakling sound. "Welcome home." A male voice said over the speakers.

If John didn't know any better, he would of said his grandfather had just welcomed him to a frozen planet. He shot a glance back at Julie. "Didn't that sound like..."

Julie nodded her head in agreement. What the heck is going on here. She asked herself.

"I'm sure we'll find out soon enough." Seth replied to her internal question. "Although, that is a strange greeting."

The voice on the speakers continued to give instructions. "Please shut down your engines and we'll lower the docking platform."

Seth did as he was told. He hoped the shuttle wouldn't be frozen by the atmosphere before they could get their ship underground. After the engines were completely shutdown, the docking platform lowered into the ground. As they descended, the outside cold weather went away and a new environment was introduced to the shuttle. That of warmth. When the docking procedure was complete the shuttle doors opened allowing John, Seth, and Julie to walk outside. As John exited the shuttle he about lost his balance, he wasn't expecting what he saw. Seth didn't notice anything out of the norm, and Julie fainted to the ground.

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"How?" John asked.

A man approached him. "Welcome home, grandson." A woman was standing next to the man.

Seth looked to John. "These are your grandparents?"

John nodded. "Yes, when they were..."

"Younger." Eric replied. "We have a lot to discuss." He looked down to Julie. "Poor girl, we must have frightened her."

Seth looked to Eric and Rebecca with questions written all over his face, he was going to have to hear their story. As of right now, he was confused more than ever.

End of Part Two